GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:233
ANSWERED ON:04.12.2002
VITAMIN-A ADMINISTRATION
MOHAN RAWALE

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

to reply given to Unstarred Question No. 1600 dated November 28, 2001 and state:

(a) whether the High Level Committee of Experts constituted to go into various programmatic and technical aspects relating to Vitamin-A Administration has submitted its report;

(b) if so, the findings thereof; and

(c) the follow-up action taken by the Government thereon?

Answer

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SHATRUGHAN SINHA)

(a)to(d): A statement is laid on the table of the Lok Sabha.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 233 FOR 4.12.2002

The Committee of Experts has submitted the report. Its salient findings/recommendations are as under:-

(i) The magnitude of Vitamin A deficiency has declined significantly, although it exists as a public health problem in some areas.

(ii) The Committee has endorsed the current policy of Vitamin A supplementation to children between 9-36 months of age at 6 monthly intervals, for the next five years. The policy should be reviewed thereafter.

(iii) The Committee has recommended the discontinuation of the campaign mode for administration of Vitamin A.

(iv) The Committee has made some technical recommendations on issues like spoon size for administering Vitamin A solution, use of Vitamin A during pregnancy and lactation; involvement of NGOs for community mobilization and increasing outreach; sensitization of district administration and media etc.

(v) The Committee has recommended `special efforts` to improve coverage with the entire package of reproductive and child health services, at periodic intervals, in districts/regions where programme performance is sub-optimal.

(vi) Regarding the incidents of child deaths in Assam allegedly caused by Vitamin A administration, the Committee, while noting that replacement of 2 ml spoon by 5 ml cups during the campaign might have led to overdosing in some cases, observed that the available evidence suggested that majority of the children who died during and after the Vitamin A campaign, had other pre-existing illnesses of sufficient severity. The Committee further observed that the world-wide experience showed that Vitamin A administered in accordance with the WHO guidelines was not associated with risk of death.

The findings/recommendations of the Committee have been shared with the States/UTs. The Government of India has already advised all States to refrain from launching campaigns not only for Vitamin A but also for other individual interventions since campaigns have a tendency to divert the attention of the entire system from regular essential services. Other recommendations of the Committee will be implemented taking into consideration the existing constraints and resource requirements.